United Nations S/2018/108

Security Council

Distr.: General
8 February 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the credentials of the deputy representative of the Russian Federation on the Security Council

Pursuant to rule 15 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Security Council, the Secretary-General wishes to report that he has received a letter dated 8 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations stating that Mr. Gennady V. Kuzmin has been appointed deputy representative of the Russian Federation on the Security Council.

In the opinion of the Secretary-General, that letter constitutes adequate provisional credentials.

18-02091 (E) 120218

Please recycle

United Nations A/72/742–S/2018/109

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
12 February 2018
English
Original: Arabic

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 37
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 8 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I should like to convey to you the following information:

Israel continues to violate the sovereignty of Lebanon by land, sea and air, in utter disregard of international law and Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). In the latter part of January alone, Israel committed 33 violations: 14 by air, 13 by sea and 6 by land. Meanwhile, Israel once again violated Lebanese airspace in the recent past in order to carry out raids in the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

I should like to remind you that my country's mission has drawn your attention more than once to a series of other violations, including by means of the identical letters dated 30 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Lebanon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (A/72/553-S/2017/915). In that letter, we drew attention to an incident in which Israeli enemy aircraft violated Lebanese airspace on 7 September 2017 in order to carry out an air raid in Syrian territory.

In addition to the daily pattern of violations of Lebanese sovereignty, these repeated violations establish a very dangerous pattern and open a new chapter in the efforts of Israel to undermine regional security and peace.

Lebanon reiterates that it complies fully with Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) and condemns in the strongest terms the ever more serious violations being committed by Israel. Those violations clearly demonstrate that Israel will not hesitate to use force indiscriminately and blithely violate all principles of international law.

Lebanon once again calls on the Security Council and the entire international community to apply effectively the necessary pressure on Israel, in order to ensure that it complies with resolution 1701 (2006) in its entirety and that it implements the resolution fully and without delay, including by halting all violations of Lebanese airspace, in particular, and the sovereignty of Lebanon, in general. The continued violation of international law and resolutions by Israel constitutes a blatant threat to regional and international security and peace.

18-02177 (E) 140218 150218

Please recycle

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of General Assembly, under agenda item 37, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Amal **Mudallali**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/110

Security Council

Distr.: General
9 February 2018

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on developments in Guinea-Bissau and the activities of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2343 (2017), by which the Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) until 28 February 2018, and requested that I report every six months on the situation in Guinea-Bissau and on progress made in the implementation of the resolution and the mandate of UNIOGBIS. The report provides an update on key political, security, human rights, socioeconomic and humanitarian developments in Guinea-Bissau since my report of 10 August 2017 (S/2017/695).

II. Major developments in Guinea-Bissau

A. Political situation

2. Since my last report, tensions have continued to mount, as the main political stakeholders in the crisis remain intransigent in their respective positions and continue to publicly blame each other for the stalemate. The multiple mediation efforts spearheaded by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have produced few tangible results thus far, owing mainly to the lack of political will and good faith among some stakeholders and their divergent interpretations of the Conakry Agreement.

3. From 17 to 19 September, the group of 15 parliamentarians expelled from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde (PAIGC) in 2016 held a conference in Bissau to consider options for "saving" the party. In its final communiqué, the conference blamed the PAIGC leadership for the breakdown of party cohesion and called for immediate action towards reconciliation and compliance with the Conakry Agreement related to their reintegration.

4. The President of Guinea-Bissau, José Mário Vaz, did not attend the seventy-second session of the General Assembly in September, as he had initially indicated he would, but was represented by Prime Minister Umaro Sissoco Embaló. In his address to the General Assembly on 21 September, the Prime Minister stated that, despite challenges in the functioning of the National Assembly and the Government, there was social peace in Guinea-Bissau. He also acknowledged that the Conakry

Please recycle

Agreement had laid out a solution to the political crisis, and expressed hope that it would be resolved with the support of international partners. In a 22 September press statement, the Forum of Democratic Parties for Political Dialogue (composed of PAIGC, the Democratic Convergence Party, the Union for Change, the National Unity Party, the Patriotic Movement and the Solidarity and Work Party) denounced the participation of Mr. Sissoco in the General Assembly, deeming him an unconstitutional Prime Minister. President Vaz had appointed the Prime Minister to his post on 16 November 2016 and, though Sissoco was one of the three candidates put forward by the President for political parties to choose from during the October 2016 Conakry talks, he was not the candidate selected by PAIGC. In appointing Sissoco as Prime Minister, the President was therefore not adhering to the Conakry Agreement.

5. In his speech on Independence Day, on 24 September, President Vaz stressed that it was up to the National Assembly to find a solution to the crisis and that the nation's problems should be resolved by the people of Guinea-Bissau themselves. The President stated that the Conakry Agreement did not mention the name of a consensus Prime Minister and that the Constitution provided for the Government to be an emanation of the parliamentary majority. On that basis, he had appointed the Government led by Prime Minister Sissoco, the only name (among the three he proposed for the Conakry talks) that he believed would have obtained consensus among more than half of parliamentarians. The President added that he had acted in accordance with the Constitution and did not violate the Conakry Agreement, and further stated that PAIGC, as the majority party in the National Assembly, had been invited to join the Government of Prime Minister Sissoco but rejected the offer, thus violating the commitment it made in Conakry.

6. On the morning of 18 October, about 120 individuals broke into PAIGC headquarters in Bissau and demanded to meet with the party leadership to deliver a petition in favour of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians. A violent confrontation ensued between the group and several PAIGC supporters inside the premises, resulting in injuries to four people. Police arrived after the assailants had been chased out. Speaking to the press, the coordinator of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians, Braima Camará, denied any prior knowledge of or involvement in the incident.

7. On 21 October, PAIGC decided to convene its congress from 30 January to 4 February 2018 in Bissau to elect a new party leader. Two-thirds of the candidates for the legislative elections would be selected subsequently by party militants in the sectors/regions, while the party leadership directly nominates the remaining third.

8. On 22 October, PAIGC leadership met with leaders of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians in the Gabú region at the latter's request. The PAIGC leader, Domingos Simões Pereira, reportedly indicated his support for the reintegration of the group into the party, but advised them to approach the party's competent organs on the matter. The meeting was inconclusive.

9. On 25 October, the leaders of 17 political parties, including PAIGC and the United People's Assembly Democratic Party of Guinea-Bissau, held a press conference to announce the formation of the Collective of Democratic Political Parties United Against the Dictatorship and denounce the Government. From 27 to 29 October, the Collective organized a series of political rallies in various constituencies in Bissau, where it reiterated calls for the President to implement the Conakry Agreement and declared that it would not allow the Government to organize the next legislative elections. From 3 to 5 November, the Collective, expanded to 18 political parties, organized three similar events in Bissau attended by approximately 2,000 people in total.

10. On 13 November, a few days before a planned demonstration by the Collective, President Vaz issued a decree dismissing the Secretary of State in charge of public order, Francisco Malam N'dur Djata. On the following day, he issued another decree dismissing the Prosecutor General, António Sedja Man, and appointing Bacar Biai to replace him. Mr. Biai became the third Prosecutor General under the Vaz administration.

11. The African Union Peace and Security Council discussed the situation in Guinea-Bissau during its 734th meeting, on 14 November. The Council expressed concern over the persisting crisis and rising tensions in the country. It commended the military for its continued respect for its constitutional mandate and called on the politicians to fully abide by their commitments. The Council underscored the need for credible elections to be held according to constitutional timelines and called for the international community to mobilize support for ECOMIB.

12. On 16 November, as a preventive measure ahead of the 16 and 17 November demonstrations organized by the Collective, the group of five international partners based in Guinea-Bissau, consisting of representatives of the African Union, the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), ECOWAS, the European Union and the United Nations, issued a joint press release calling on all political actors to demonstrate restraint and moderation and inviting them to express their views and disagreements peacefully.

13. On the same day, the Collective held a demonstration in Bissau to demand that the President implement the Conakry Agreement and dismiss the Prime Minister. The event was marred by clashes between demonstrators and security forces. Several demonstrators reportedly sustained injuries and 14 were detained by the Public Order Police but released the same day. The Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League issued a statement on the same day condemning the security forces' "disproportionate and illegal action". The Collective announced that it would proceed with its second march on 17 November and accused ECOWAS, the African Union and the United Nations of not being impartial or firm in their engagements to resolve the crisis.

14. Later that same day, the Collective sought the support of UNIOGBIS to prevent a recurrence of the earlier events. The 17 November demonstration eventually took place in a peaceful and orderly manner, following intensive consultations between representatives of the Collective and the Interior Ministry, facilitated by the group of five international partners based in Guinea-Bissau, under the leadership of my Special Representative. At the Ministry's request, ECOMIB deployed troops to assist with security during the march.

15. On 28 November, the President of the National Assembly issued a public statement denouncing alleged assassination plots targeting him and the PAIGC leader. The Prosecutor General issued a communiqué the following day asking the National Assembly to produce evidence of the alleged plot. On the same day, his office issued a press release stating that there was no constitutional limit to the freedom to conduct demonstrations, but that they must be peaceful and comply with applicable norms, failing which they risked losing constitutional protection.

16. On 29 November, the group of five issued another statement encouraging the Interior Ministry to provide the necessary support to the Collective to exercise its constitutional right of peaceful assembly and urging the Collective to respect a previously agreed itinerary and ensure that demonstrators refrain from violence. In response, the Government issued a statement on 30 November criticizing the statement as untimely, unwise and unbalanced. Thereafter, disagreements between the Collective and the Interior Ministry on the administrative and legal process for demonstrations continued. During a press conference on 29 November, the Collective

announced that its marches planned for 30 November and 1 December would be postponed to 7, 8, 14 and 15 December.

17. On 30 November, the National Assembly issued a press release about its Permanent Commission's decision to reject the elaboration of an agenda for the last parliamentary session of 2017, while also urging the Government to provide funding to ensure the proper functioning of the body.

18. On 1 and 2 December, a high-level ECOWAS delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Togo, Robert Dussey, and comprising the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea, Naby K. Bangoura, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Senegal, Ibrahim Seck, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Marcel Alain de Souza, visited Bissau to assess the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The delegation met with all the key stakeholders. During a meeting between the ECOWAS delegation and representatives of the Party for Social Renewal, the latter claimed that the first point of the Conakry Agreement, on the appointment of a consensual Prime Minister, had already been implemented.

19. On 3 December, the ECOWAS delegation issued a communiqué in which it urged the parties to respect public liberties, including the right to peaceful protest; underscored the importance of the organization of elections within the constitutional time frame; and deferred the decision on the application of collective and individual sanctions and the maintenance or withdrawal of ECOMIB to the fifty-second ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, to be held in Abuja on 16 December.

20. On the evening of 6 December, the Interior Ministry, through the Commissioner of the Public Order Police, issued a statement denying rumours that it had refused to receive notice of a demonstration being organized by the Collective and stressing that marches and parades were only allowed on Sundays and holidays after 12 p.m. or after working hours during the week.

21. On 7 December, the police prevented the Collective from holding its planned demonstration. Although only a relatively small number of demonstrators had gathered, police action against the marchers was criticized by political commentators and human rights groups, notably for attempting to prevent journalists from covering the event.

22. On 11 December, President Vaz invited PAIGC, the President of the National Assembly, the Women's Facilitation Group and the group of five international partners based in Guinea-Bissau and other stakeholders to a meeting on 13 December for a joint analysis of the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. PAIGC, the President of the National Assembly and their respective political allies, as well as the Women's Facilitation Group, declined to attend.

23. On 13 December, the Collective announced the suspension of the demonstrations that had been initially scheduled for 14 and 15 December, to assess the outcomes of the fifty-second ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS with respect to the situation in Guinea-Bissau, but reiterated its intention to continue to hold marches until President Vaz complied with the Conakry Agreement.

24. On 15 December, the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority, President Faure Gnassingbé of Togo, and the ECOWAS Mediator for Guinea-Bissau, President Alpha Condé of Guinea, held separate consultations with President Vaz, the President of the National Assembly, leaders of parties represented in the National Assembly and the coordinator of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians on the margins of the ECOWAS summit. On the same day, during a meeting with the aforementioned

political representatives from Guinea-Bissau, President Gnassingbé announced that President Vaz had agreed to the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement, particularly the appointment of Augusto Olivais as Prime Minister, provided that the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians were fully reintegrated into the party and that the National Assembly would hold its plenary on the same day. President Condé subsequently held separate discussions with the PAIGC leader and the coordinator of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians on their reintegration into the party. No conclusive agreement was reached.

25. On 16 December, in the final communiqué of the fifty-second ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Authority expressed its disappointment at the lack of progress in the peace process and took note of a new road map presented by President Vaz for the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. It requested both its Chair and the Mediator for Guinea-Bissau to continue consultations with stakeholders to reach a consensual implementation of this road map within 30 days. The Authority warned that in the absence of progress, individual and collective sanctions would be imposed on those impeding the implementation of the Agreement. The Authority further requested the international community to support the implementation of the sanctions it may impose. The communiqué made no reference to legislative elections in 2018 or to ECOMIB.

26. On 21 December, President Vaz convened a meeting in Bissau on his road map to end the political and institutional crisis. The Vice-President of the National Assembly, the Prime Minister, leaders of parliamentary parties, the coordinator of the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians and representatives of civil society organizations and the Women's Facilitation Group were in attendance. In the road map, President Vaz calls for: (a) acceptance by the ECOWAS Authority of the immediate and unconditional reintegration of PAIGC militants, officials and other leaders from the grassroots structures to the national organs; (b) the cancellation of the regional PAIGC conferences and the lifting of sanctions and expulsions in effect for the Party; (c) immediate reopening of the plenary sessions of the National Assembly; (d) dismissal of the Prime Minister; (e) launching of consultations with parliamentary political parties and the group of 15 expelled parliamentarians, with a view to appointing a consensual Prime Minister; and (f) appointment of a new Prime Minister within the framework of the Conakry Agreement. Participants expressed divergent views on his proposals.

27. In his New Year message on 31 December, President Vaz, inter alia, thanked the international partners of Guinea-Bissau, with special reference to ECOWAS for its efforts to resolve the crisis in the country. The President acknowledged that the political actors had a shared responsibility for the continuation of the political and institutional crisis. He added that the crisis could also be an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the past and for the people of Guinea-Bissau to find new ways of fostering national reconciliation. The President also alluded to his road map as an important instrument for the way forward in implementing the Conakry Agreement. He made no reference to the holding of legislative elections, which are expected to take place this year, in accordance with constitutional requirements, and for which technical preparations are ongoing.

28. On 12 January, Prime Minister Sissoco submitted his resignation letter to President Vaz. The President issued a decree accepting the resignation on 16 January. On the same day, a new ECOWAS high-level delegation, led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Togo and the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea, arrived in Bissau to follow up on the 30-day deadline imposed at the ECOWAS summit in Abuja for the parties to overcome the political impasse. In a statement issued on 19 January, the high-level delegation noted that no significant progress had been achieved in the implementation of the Conakry Agreement. It

further indicated that adequate processes would be launched for the establishment of sanctions against any person impeding the implementation of the Agreement.

29. On 27 January, the ECOWAS Authority discussed Guinea-Bissau at an extraordinary session held in the margins of the thirtieth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa, and issued a communiqué calling for the appointment of a Prime Minister of consensus by 31 January, failing which individual and collective sanctions would be applied to individuals and organizations obstructing the process. The Authority also extended the mandate of ECOMIB to 31 March. On 30 January, President Vaz issued a decree nominating Artur Da Silva as Prime Minister. Mr. Da Silva, a member of the Central Committee of PAIGC, was sworn into office as Prime Minister on 31 January. In a statement issued that day, PAIGC rejected his appointment. On the same day, the police prevented PAIGC from opening its party congress at its headquarters. Instead, PAIGC opened its congress at a local hotel late in the evening. On 1 February, the police allowed PAIGC access to the building again, which enabled the party to resume its congress at that location.

30. As decided during the extraordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority on 27 January, an ECOWAS delegation, comprising the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Togo, the Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency of Guinea, and the President of the ECOWAS Commission, arrived in Bissau on 31 January. On 1 February the delegation issued a communiqué declaring, inter alia, that the appointment of a Prime Minister of consensus, as prescribed in the Conakry Agreement, had not been respected and stating that collective and individual sanctions would be applied from that day.

31. On 4 February, the ECOWAS Authority, pursuant to its decisions of 27 January, imposed targeted sanctions on 19 individuals deemed to be obstructing the implementation of the Conakry Agreement, with a provision to revise the list depending on the evolution of the political situation. The sanctions include the suspension of the 19 individuals from ECOWAS activities as well as a travel ban and assets freeze for the individuals and their families. The Authority further requested the African Union, CPLP, the European Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the United Nations to support ECOWAS in the enforcement of the sanctions.[1]

B. Security situation

32. Overall, the security situation is fluid. The political crisis is generating mounting frustration among the population, who are translating their frustration into frequent street protests. There is concern that the uncertain political environment could create a favourable climate for instability and opportunistic criminality.

33. On 16 December, four military personnel were arrested for alleged involvement in a plot to carry out an attack on the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, General Biaguê Na N'Tam. On 23 and 26 December, two additional military personnel were arrested in connection with the plot. All are currently in pretrial detention.

[1] ECOWAS decision A/DEC.2.01/2018.

C. Human rights situation

34. The human rights situation remained largely unchanged, but deteriorated significantly when the Government began restricting political participation and peaceful assembly in January. On 30 January, the group of five international partners based in Guinea-Bissau issued a statement underscoring the need for national authorities to ensure full respect for the rule of law and human rights, including the rights to freedom of assembly and political participation, and to refrain from any actions or public rhetoric that could further aggravate tensions in the country.

35. The ability of the State to ensure respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights remains limited. Consequently, no progress was made in investigating or addressing past gross human rights violations. Moreover, the country has not taken steps to establish an independent national human rights institution, in accordance with the Paris Principles, as the National Human Rights Commission continues to work under State supervision and guidance.

36. National stakeholders continued to express concern over challenges to freedom of the press, including censorship and bias in the application of the law on the freedom of assembly and demonstrations. In an open letter dated 15 November, the Collective of Democratic Political Parties United Against the Dictatorship pointed out that legal limitations that prevented it from demonstrating were not invoked to limit pro-Government demonstrations earlier in the year, on 9 March and on 6 and 7 November.

37. On 10 August, the National Human Rights Commission held its first quarterly ordinary meeting, after the appointment of a new chair in April. Participants discussed the domestic human rights situation, emphasizing the importance of the protection of vulnerable children and the challenges to freedom of expression.

38. On 30 August, workers of State-owned media signed a petition "to end censorship", and on 14 September the national television station workers' union declared a three-day strike supported by the national journalists' association. On 28 November, a group of journalists gathered at the office of the Prosecutor General in solidarity with a colleague from a private radio station who had been arrested for defamation after publishing allegations of nepotism within the Ministry of Health on his Facebook page. No charges were filed.

39. As part of its collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission, UNIOGBIS provided technical, logistical and financial support for field assessments by national authorities in the Bafatá, Biombo and Quinara regions in September, October and November. The authorities reported marginal progress in health care services, and a perceived decline in forced and early marriage, as well as in female genital mutilation, in Bafatá. It was noted that limited access to justice remained a major challenge in all the regions visited, in part because of the lack of transportation and financial means. It was also observed that in Biombo, teenage pregnancy, forced marriage and rape were reportedly recurrent, and that gaps in child registration and the issuance of identification cards for women/mothers posed challenges of recognition before the law and limited the right of children to education. Recurrent domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence were also reported in Quinara, and specialized shelters for female victims of violence were unavailable in the region, which is one of the least developed in Guinea-Bissau.

40. On 1 November, the Government adopted a draft law to regulate family shelters to enhance child protection from trafficking and forced marriage. There are only nine operational shelters for children and youth in the country (5 in Bissau, 2 in Gabu, 1 in Bafatá and 1 in Canchungo), which are managed by civil society organizations.

UNIOGBIS also provided technical support to civil society organizations to contribute to efforts on a law against forced marriage and forced begging.

41. Following a strike action in the education sector from 6 to 26 November, stakeholders expressed persistent concerns over the quality of, and overall access to, the educational system.

D. Social, economic and humanitarian situation

42. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) released its fourth national consultative report for Guinea-Bissau on 2 October. In the report, IMF indicated that the prospects for continued macroeconomic stability were generally positive, with annual growth between 5 and 6 per cent. It also pointed to positive fiscal discipline, increased revenue collection and greater transparency in public expenditure management.

43. The cashew harvest, the backbone of the economy, saw record prices in 2017, which compensated for a slightly lower annual production than the previous year. Nonetheless, Guinea-Bissau remains one of the 10 poorest countries in the world, with an annual per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of $641.6, one of the lowest in the region.

44. Labour unrest was recurrent during the reporting period and affected service delivery, particularly in the education and health sectors. On 11 August, the Government reached an agreement with the National Union of Workers, following their 8 to 11 August general strike to demand higher wages and a commitment to implement an incremental salary adjustment.

III. Status of implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau

A. Fostering inclusive political dialogue and supporting national reconciliation processes

45. UNIOGBIS continued to support initiatives aimed at overcoming the current stalemate, preventing tensions from escalating and creating opportunities for dialogue among national political actors. My Special Representative consulted with a range of political and social stakeholders, including political parties, civil society representatives and traditional, religious and community leaders, reiterating the importance of constructive dialogue as a solution to the crisis. He continued to coordinate the group of five and other international partners based in Guinea-Bissau. Recent consultations of the group of five have focused on modalities for assisting stakeholders in addressing existing and emerging challenges posed by rising political and social tensions in the country. International partners continued to appeal to political stakeholders to exercise restraint and moderation and to express views and differences peacefully.

46. On 12 September, my Special Representative met with the Women's Facilitation Group, which has been active in recent months in complementary advocacy and mediation among political actors. The Group urged the group of five to exert pressure on stakeholders, particularly the President, to engage in dialogue on implementation of the Conakry Agreement. The Group stated its intention to continue its national dialogue facilitation, and my Special Representative undertook to sustain support for their efforts through his good offices and the group of five forum.

47. On 21 September, with the support of UNIOGBIS, the organizing commission for the national conference towards the consolidation of peace and development in Guinea-Bissau held a march in Bissau to celebrate the International Day of Peace. The march, which brought together more than 150 participants from civil society and the defence and security forces, served to sensitize and mobilize the population to the need to advance national reconciliation. The march was followed by an interactive debate broadcast on two national radio stations.

48. Between 14 September and 19 October, the National Institute for Studies and Research, with the support of UNIOGBIS, held five conferences on institutional reform, thus concluding a cycle of seven conferences conducted since June. The conferences focused on: transparency challenges in the management of the public treasury and revenues; teaching history as a tool for peacebuilding; the role of civil society organizations in the cyclical political crises; political interference in the judicial system; and the country's readiness for the legislative elections.

49. On 27 October, UNIOGBIS and Lusophone University in Bissau jointly organized a youth conference on citizens' contributions to democratic processes. The event drew 109 participants (including 41 women) from Bissau and the regions. Participants welcomed the partnership between civil society organizations and UNIOGBIS and underscored the significance of citizens' collective engagement in democratic governance.

50. UNIOGBIS, with the assistance of an expert deployed by the Mediation Support Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, held a working session on 14 and 15 November aimed at sustaining the work of the Women's Facilitation Group. The expert assisted the 28 participants, including two men from the Women's Forum for Peace, in designing the next phase of its facilitation efforts and identifying potential additional areas of UNIOGBIS support to the Group, including in capacity-building and training.

B. Review of the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau

51. As noted in my report of 10 August (S/2017/695), national stakeholders have made no progress in implementing the Conakry Agreement as it relates to the review of the Constitution, owing mainly to the failure to agree on a consensual Prime Minister and the stalemate in the National Assembly. The lack of consensus and progress towards resolving the crisis continues to affect the functioning of State institutions. Consequently, the ad hoc commission on constitutional reform of the National Assembly did not convene during the reporting period.

C. National security sector reform and rule of law strategies

52. UNIOGBIS continued to provide strategic and technical assistance to State institutions for more effective and efficient law enforcement, criminal justice and penitentiary systems. Notwithstanding some improvement in coordination within the criminal justice system, including harmonization between regular and military justice practice, challenges persisted in a number of areas. These included the limited capacities of judicial personnel, weak institutional structures and limited access to justice, particularly in the regions.

53. The political impasse in the country continues to hinder progress in key areas of the security sector, notably the rejuvenation of the armed forces and effective civilian oversight. Overall, the lack of engagement between the executive and the legislative branches is affecting the national security apparatus and the development

of policy guidelines for civilian oversight and accountability mechanisms for the military and law enforcement agencies. With the continuing paralysis of the National Assembly, no new laws or amendments to existing ones could be adopted, and the Government's programme and budget could not be approved. In addition, the limited availability of human and material resources to implement approved legal frameworks and policies, which underpin the existence and mandates of the military and law enforcement agencies, remained a key challenge.

54. The establishment of a police academy to professionalize law enforcement and further strengthen its capacity remains a priority for UNIOGBIS. The academy would train and provide a curriculum and certification process for law enforcement personnel, in line with the organic law of the country. The training would be predicated on a transparent, nationally owned recruitment and selection system.

55. In order to maintain its field presence beyond Bissau, UNIOGBIS, on 1 December, reopened its Bubaque regional office, which had been closed during the rainy season. Ongoing engagement through other United Nations regional offices (Bafatá, São Domingos and Buba) with local authorities and communities has been useful in strengthening local capacity to prevent conflict and promote stability. UNIOGBIS and its national partners have, through community engagement, reassured local stakeholders about addressing security challenges and concerns.

56. In furtherance of the rule of law and security sector reform efforts, on 30 August, UNIOGBIS, with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), signed a three-year joint programme on police, justice and corrections to provide strategic and technical support to national law enforcement, justice and corrections counterparts. The ambitious programme, with estimated funding of $25 million, will be executed over the coming three years. In tandem, the African Development Bank, UNDP and the Ministry of Finance, signed a $1.8 million agreement on 16 November to strengthen the capacities of justice institutions over the next two years.

57. UNIOGBIS also supported the Ministry of Defence, through the National Defence Institute, in completing and submitting to the Minister the draft national defence policy and national defence strategy for review and approval on 9 October.

D. Mobilization, harmonization and coordination of international assistance

58. During the reporting period, my Special Representative remained fully engaged with international partners based in Bissau to assess developments on the ground. He held regular meetings with the group of five international partners based in Guinea-Bissau and other representatives of the diplomatic community in Guinea-Bissau.

59. On 14 September, my Special Representative met with members of the group of five to evaluate the political challenges and seek their views on the way forward prior to the general debate of the General Assembly. The group reaffirmed the central importance of the Conakry Agreement and of reminding all stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau about their obligations to meet their commitments. On 16 August, he met with the President of Guinea in Conakry to take stock of the political situation in Guinea-Bissau.

60. From 18 to 22 September, my Special Representative held consultations on Guinea-Bissau in the margins of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly

with the Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Portugal and the Congo, the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, the Executive Secretary of CPLP and representatives of Angola, Portugal and the European Union. The interlocutors expressed their shared concerns over the deteriorating situation in Guinea-Bissau and reiterated the central importance of the Conakry Agreement. Moreover, they restated their willingness to continue to work with the United Nations and political actors of Guinea-Bissau towards a resolution of the crisis.

61. On 16 November, at the request of the Collective of Democratic Political Parties United Against the Dictatorship, my Special Representative, together with members of the group of five, met with the Interior Minister to urge him to meet with the Collective's leaders and jointly agree on the necessary measures to facilitate a peaceful demonstration planned for 17 November.

62. On 29 November, my Special Representative convened a meeting of international partners accredited to Guinea-Bissau ahead of the visit of the ECOWAS ministerial mission of 1 to 3 December. A joint UNDP/European Union electoral support mission briefed the meeting on the technical preparations, including voter registration, for the legislative elections in 2018.

E. Strengthening democratic institutions and enhancing the capacity of State organs

63. From 24 to 26 October, UNIOGBIS conducted missions to Buba (Quinara region) and Bolama (Bolama region) to meet the newly appointed governors of both regions and to consult with local authorities, including security and defence forces, and with civil society organizations, on their needs and the challenges related to decentralization, human rights and development. From 28 October to 1 November, UNIOGBIS undertook a similar mission to Bafatá and Gabú, the capitals of the Bafatá and Gabú regions, respectively.

64. UNIOGBIS also supported the National Judicial Training Centre in the delivery of a five-week capacity-development programme for the Supreme Court of Justice and the office of the Prosecutor General, focused on managing staff grievances that had resulted in a court clerks strike earlier in 2017. The training included presentations on criminal law provisions, judicial fees and other related fields. Thirty court clerks from Bissau and the regions benefited from the training, which took place from 7 August to 1 September and from 30 October to 3 November, in Bissau.

65. On 16 November, UNIOGBIS provided technical support to, and participated in, a workshop organized to strengthen coordination between the office of the Prosecutor General and law enforcement agencies. The workshop sought to address mechanisms to strengthen collaboration and coordination among the State criminal justice actors. Twenty-two participants from the office of the Prosecutor General, the Judiciary Police and the Security and Information Services benefited from the technical support.

66. Government budgetary constraints continued to hinder the speedy implementation of programmes to strengthen democratic institutions. Owing to a lack of sufficient resources for the Justice Ministry, the high-level National Justice Forum scheduled for 21 to 23 November was not held. The Forum seeks to enhance the capacity of the justice system to address money-laundering and terrorism, cybercrimes, economic and financial crimes, military crimes and enforcement. In September, UNIOGBIS provided both financial and technical support to facilitate six consultative preparatory forums for three of the Justice Ministry's working groups, on criminal justice, military justice and the penitentiary system.

F. Law enforcement, criminal justice and penitentiary systems

67. UNIOGBIS continued to provide secretariat support to the Superior Council for Police and Internal Security Coordination to enhance inter-agency law enforcement coordination on methods to curb drug trafficking, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. As part of this ongoing effort, UNIOGBIS facilitated meetings of the Council, led by the head of the Public Order Police, on 23 August, 25 October and 29 November. The Director of Prison Services and the President of the Superior Military Tribunal participated for the first time to establish a coordination mechanism between their institutions for the promotion and protection of, and respect for, human rights, with a focus on arbitrary and protracted pre-trial detentions in prisons and police custody.

68. On 31 October and 1 November, UNIOGBIS facilitated a two-day validation workshop for the strategic development plans of the police and internal security institutions. A representative from the office of the Prime Minister chaired the workshop, which was attended by 40 senior government officials, including the heads of the Public Order Police, the National Guard, the Judiciary Police, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the Security and Information Services.

69. On 23 November, UNIOGBIS met with the head of the Public Order Police Cooperation Office to plan implementation of the strategic development plan relating to human resources management and training.

G. Promotion and protection of human rights

70. UNIOGBIS continued to assist national authorities in the promotion and protection of human rights, including through strategic advice and technical and financial support. From 16 to 18 August, UNIOGBIS supported the National Human Rights Commission in assessing prisons and detention centres in Bissau and in the Oio, Tombali, Quinara, Bafatá and Gabú regions. Arbitrary arrests and prolonged detention were common in these regions, except in the model police station in Bissau, owing to the fact that case files were poorly kept or non-existent.

71. UNIOGBIS also provided technical and financial support to the National Human Rights Commission for the finalization of a nationwide assessment of the human rights situation. The assessment, launched in 2016 in the regions of Gabú, Oio, Tombali and Bolama/Bijagós, included visits in 2017 to the Bafatá, Biombo and Quinara regions.

72. On 16 and 17 November, with UNIOGBIS support, the National Human Rights Commission organized a strategic retreat on monitoring implementation of the recommendations of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council and other human rights mechanisms. The Commission adopted its proposed activities for 2018, which include elaborating a national human rights action plan and submitting several overdue reports to human rights mechanisms.

73. From 23 October to 8 November, UNIOGBIS held workshops in Bafatá, Quinara and Cacheu for approximately 180 participants, including 87 women and 24 persons with disabilities, aimed at strengthening the human rights capacity of administrators of justice and civil society organizations, with emphasis on human rights perspectives on land and electoral laws and the normative framework on domestic violence and forced marriage. In addition, UNIOGBIS, from 23 November to 10 December, supported the organization by national authorities and other

stakeholders of 16 days of activism on violence against women and the celebration of Human Rights Day.

74. From 28 November to 14 December, UNIOGBIS sponsored the training of 105 human rights defenders, including 66 women, in the southern, eastern and northern regions of Guinea-Bissau. On 9 December, on the occasion of International Human Rights Defenders Day, UNIOGBIS supported the formal establishment of the Network of National Human Rights Defenders.

75. Other human rights capacity-building initiatives undertaken by UNIOGBIS included targeted training on the right of women to political participation, in collaboration with the Network of Women Parliamentarians, in October and November in Bafatá, Buba and Canchungo. This included human rights awareness-raising workshops for 100 members of political parties on 4 October; 20 police officers of the Bissau model police station on 27 November; and 50 crowd control police officers in Bissau on 12 December. General human rights sensitization workshops were also undertaken in Buba from 31 October to 2 November, Bafatá from 23 to 25 October, and São Domingos from 7 to 9 November, with the participation of a total of 140 members of civil society.

H. Combating drug trafficking and transnational organized crime

76. During the period under review, the capacity of the Transnational Crime Unit appeared undermined, owing, among other things, to frequent personnel changes in the senior ranks of the Justice Ministry, which has oversight responsibility for the Unit and provides most its personnel. This challenge was further compounded by budgetary constraints that have left the office of UNODC in Guinea-Bissau understaffed.

77. UNIOGBIS, nonetheless, continued to provide technical advice to personnel of the Transnational Crime Unit in the implementation of the West Africa Coast Initiative. A joint assessment was conducted by partners of the Initiative in April and May, and the findings were presented to the High-level Policy Committee of the Initiative during its meeting of 5 December in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire, for endorsement.

78. UNIOGBIS also provided technical guidance to other law enforcement agencies responsible for the conduct of intelligence-based drug trafficking investigations, including through enhanced regional and international cooperation activities. In furtherance of efforts in support of national counterparts in the fight against transnational organized crime, UNIOGBIS, in collaboration with the national INTERPOL bureau, conducted a joint equipment-based training for 27 law enforcement officers at three major border control entry points in São Domingos, from 4 to 9 December; Pirada, from 11 to 15 December; and Bubaque from 18 to 22 December.

79. On 14 September, UNIOGBIS conducted technical assessment visits to six border control posts, with a special focus on the Djegue border with Senegal in the São Domingos sector. However, there was no significant observation of the incidence of drug and human trafficking along the routes connecting Guinea-Bissau to Senegal and Guinea.

I. Incorporating a gender perspective into peacebuilding

80. The integration of gender-sensitive perspectives into the work of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team continued to be accorded the highest priority. Key gender-related activities focused on support for women's participation as active peacemakers in resolving the political crisis. Technical and operational support activities were provided to encourage women's mediation efforts and to enhance their effectiveness as leaders. During the reporting period, my Special Representative maintained strategic engagement with the Women's Facilitation Group as part of greater efforts to reach out to national stakeholders and the international community. As part of a new package of projects, the Group will continue its work with support from the Peacebuilding Fund.

81. On 21 August, the Women's Facilitation Group briefed the Guinea-Bissau configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, with the facilitation of my Special Representative, who also continued to ensure that the Group's mediation efforts were consistent with the advocacy of international partners. The Group also had a similar opportunity to brief the ECOWAS ministerial mission, which visited Bissau from 1 to 3 December.

82. On 1 November, the Council of Ministers adopted a decree to accelerate implementation of the Government's national policy on gender equality and equity. The decree focuses on an improved legal framework to promote gender equality and women's rights and the role of women in decision-making and to combat violence against, and trafficking of, women and girls. The United Nations intends to use the framework as a basis for initiating new projects aimed at reducing poverty through the empowerment of women.

83. On 24 November, the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Solidarity organized a reflection workshop on gender-based violence in Bissau. The UNDP-sponsored workshop gathered 70 participants, including 7 men, from civil society and national institutions to deliberate on strategies to combat gender-based violence and to strengthen women's participation in decision-making.

J. Preparation for legislative and presidential elections in 2018 and 2019

84. Despite the prevailing political stalemate, the Government began technical preparations for the legislative and presidential elections, to be held in 2018 and 2019, respectively. On 20 and 25 October, the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process launched its programme to update the electoral cartography of polling station sites in the Gabú and Bafatá regions, a necessary precursor to the updating of the jurisdiction of electoral districts countrywide. Similar exercises were subsequently undertaken in the other regions of the country until the end of November, when they were concluded.

85. On 7 November, my Special Representative chaired a meeting of international partners to discuss the political situation and preparations for the elections. UNIOGBIS presented the recommendations of the United Nations electoral needs assessment mission conducted in May, while UNDP briefed on the ongoing technical support provided to the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and the National Electoral Commission. Several international partners stressed the need to organize elections within the stipulated constitutional time frame. However, despite the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process and the National Electoral Commission having commenced technical preparations, concerns remain about the feasibility of holding elections ahead of a satisfactory resolution of the political crisis.

The blockage of the National Assembly poses a specific problem, as the mandate of four executive members National Electoral Commission expired in June and the presidency of the Commission remains vacant, and only the National Assembly (which has not met since January 2016) can appoint new Commission members. While the interim president of the Commission has submitted a proposed timeline to President Vaz for the legislative elections, which are scheduled to take place on 20 May 2018, the President has not yet confirmed the date.

86. From 22 to 24 November, with financial support from UNIOGBIS, Commission organized a training workshop for 100 representatives, including 20 women, from the media, civil society and political parties. The workshop, which focused on the theme of "Leadership, the electoral system and management of disputes in the electoral process", aimed at strengthening understanding and a culture of dialogue among stakeholders ahead of the anticipated polls.

87. A joint UNDP/European Union delegation was deployed to Bissau from 25 November to 1 December to assist the electoral authorities in developing an electoral assistance project document. This was followed by a joint voter registration expert mission of UNDP and the Electoral Affairs Division of the Department of Political Affairs, from 9 to 16 December, to provide technical support in preparation for the voter registration exercise. Several technical challenges remain, especially regarding the updating of the voters register, which has not been undertaken since 2014. It is estimated that the exercise will cost between $2.5 and $2.8 million. A support package for the Technical Support Office for the Electoral Process, which lacks the necessary expertise in some areas, is currently being prepared by international partners in Bissau. The UNDP/European Union mission emphasized the importance of holding elections before the four-month rainy season, which usually begins in June, because of the logistical challenges the heavy rains would present.

IV. Cross-cutting issues

A. Integration of the United Nations system

88. On 15 December, the Peacebuilding Support Office approved six projects under the Intermediate Response Facility of the Peacebuilding Fund for approximately $7.3 million. The projects will contribute to the sociopolitical empowerment of women and youth, political dialogue and national reconciliation, and strengthening of conflict-sensitivity in the media and the justice sectors, and are characterized by a high-level of integration of programmatic activities among United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and UNIOGBIS. The projects build on two participatory workshops held in Bissau from 19 to 21 and 26 to 28 September, which were co-facilitated by the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Geneva-based non-governmental organization, Interpeace. Through the workshops, a wide range of national stakeholders were consulted in an effort to analyse current peacebuilding challenges and to redefine peacebuilding priorities in Guinea-Bissau.

B. Public information

89. During the reporting period, UNIOGBIS activities were consistently covered in local and international media. In total, 117 multimedia posts were published on Facebook and 25 on Twitter, 24 press releases were issued and 18 articles on the website and four internal newsletters — all in both English and Portuguese — were published. In addition, two issues of *I Kuma*, the external newsletter featuring the work of the United Nations in Guinea-Bissau, were published, and more than 3,000

copies were circulated throughout the country. UNIOGBIS also produced and broadcast nine hour-long radio programmes with live question-and-answer segments, in Creole and Portuguese, focusing on the mission's mandate, the Conakry Agreement, peace consolidation, human rights, and women's participation in politics, among other topics. The programmes were broadcast nationwide through a network of 27 community radio stations.

90. On 4 and 5 October, UNIOGBIS organized a workshop for political parties on political communication. The two-day meeting brought together 115 participants, including key communications officers from 11 different political parties, for a training session designed to enhance professionalism in reporting. The workshop also created a forum in which participants could articulate their party's vision for the country and reach consensus on key political priorities.

91. To mark United Nations Day on 24 October, UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team organized a photo exhibition on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in Bissau and Bafatá. More than 250 students attended the exhibitions, which were designed to increase awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and their relevance for development benchmarking for Guinea-Bissau.

C. Staff safety and security

92. The overall security situation for United Nations staff in Guinea-Bissau remained stable. Security incidents that occurred were consistent with normal trends, and did not affect United Nations operations. Crime, especially street robbery and burglaries, remained a phenomenon confronting the general population, but rarely affected United Nations staff.

V. Observations

93. The continuing efforts of ECOWAS to resolve the Guinea-Bissau crisis, particularly the mediation efforts by Presidents Gnassingbe and Condé are commendable. The subregion has a responsibility to come together and push for the full implementation of the Conakry Agreement as a crucial step for the holding of inclusive elections. In particular, the international community should continue its advocacy to ensure that legislative elections are held within the constitutionally mandated time frame and that support is provided to the electoral process.

94. I take note of the decisions on Guinea-Bissau taken during the fifty-second ordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Abuja and the extraordinary session of the Authority in Addis Ababa on 27 January. I also take note of the communiqué issued by the ECOWAS ministerial mission following its visit to Guinea-Bissau on 31 January and 1 February. The mission noted that the appointment of a consensual Prime Minister, as prescribed in the Conakry Agreement, was not respected. In its decisions, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government declared its resolve to impose targeted sanctions on those obstructing the implementation of the Conakry Agreement, which was reaffirmed by the follow-up ECOWAS ministerial mission in its communiqué of 1 February. I reiterate my call on the Security Council to consider ways to ensure the speedy resolution of the crisis.

95. The presence of ECOMIB has contributed towards ensuring stability in Guinea-Bissau, and I salute the sacrifices made by ECOWAS member States who have committed both troops and funding to ECOMIB. The international community needs to continue to support and assist ECOMIB.

96. I encourage the defence and security institutions of Guinea-Bissau, particularly the armed forces, to maintain their non-interference posture in the political process while playing their constitutionally mandated role. At the same time, the reform of defence and security institutions must remain a key priority, as the crisis has hampered efforts to modernize security institutions. I reiterate my call on international partners to support Guinea-Bissau in implementing the necessary changes.

97. The promotion of and respect for human rights is fundamental to sustaining peace and ensuring long-term stability and development in Guinea-Bissau. I deeply regret that the positive steps taken by national authorities have been undermined by the actions they have taken to prevent peaceful assembly and political participation, particularly during the period from 29 to 31 January. I call on national authorities to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms and refrain from any further acts that undermine the rule of law. I also I strongly encourage them to redouble their efforts to build, through education, at all levels and in all institutions, a culture of respect for human rights and accountability.

98. I welcome the efforts by the Government to promote gender equality and equity and encourage national authorities to step up efforts to increase and support women's participation in the country's decision-making processes.

99. The mandate of UNIOGBIS expires on 28 February. The resolution of the long-standing political impasse is a precondition for the successful consolidation of peace in Guinea-Bissau and for holding inclusive elections. Consequently, the United Nations should remain engaged in peacebuilding efforts in the country and support ECOWAS efforts to resolve the political crisis. I therefore recommend that the current mandate of UNIOGBIS be extended for another year, until 28 February 2019. Should the parties fail to find a consensual solution to resolve the political impasse, I intend to authorize an assessment of the current mission, and I will present options to the Security Council on a possible reconfiguration of the United Nations presence in the country.

100. I thank the staff of UNIOGBIS and the United Nations country team, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Modibo Ibrahim Touré, for their commitment and hard work, and bilateral, regional and international partners for their unrelenting support to the building of lasting peace in Guinea-Bissau.

United Nations S/2018/111

Security Council

Distr.: General
12 February 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 10 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

In the early morning of 10 February 2018, an Iranian unmanned aerial vehicle was launched from a site in east Homs, Syria, into Israeli airspace. The Israel Defense Forces intercepted the unmanned aerial vehicle and proceeded to take additional defensive measures against the launching site. During Israel's defensive efforts, a Syrian surface-to-air missile shot down an Israeli plane carrying two pilots. Both pilots survived but one was severely injured.

This is not the first time that Israel has warned you of Iran's dangerous and destabilizing behaviour towards Israel and our region. The incident described in the present letter proves every one of those warnings. In addition, Israel holds the Syrian Government accountable for every attack that involves its territory. Israel will defend its citizens and territory and will not tolerate any violation of its sovereignty.

I call upon the Security Council to condemn this dangerous act and end Iran's provocations now. I also urge the Security Council to call upon the Syrian Government to put an immediate end to all of its aggressive behaviour. You must not hold back while Iran instigates dangerous escalations of violence, violates the sovereignty of another nation, breaches Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) and others and puts innocent civilians in jeopardy.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Danny **Danon**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-02130 (E) 140218

Please recycle